



## Are you a first-time boss? Avoid these 4 pitfalls

By [Joel Garfinkle](#) on November 17th, 2014

So, the promotion finally came through. You've joined the management ranks. You're excited, apprehensive, and itching to get started, all at the same time. **Succeeding at getting that promotion** is just the first step. **Succeeding at being a good boss** is another thing altogether.

You don't just want to be a boss — you want to be a great boss. But if you stumble out of the starting gate you may never have that chance. Here are four major pitfalls most new bosses face and how you can avoid them.

**Pitfall No. 1:** You don't know your boss' expectations.

**How to avoid it:** Set up a meeting, and do it sooner rather than later. Even a week of being headed in the wrong direction can do some serious damage to your image. Remember, one of your first tasks is to make your boss's job easier. The first question I often recommend is, "If we sit down together three months from now, how will you know that I'm being successful?" The answers to this question can make sure you and your boss are on the same page from Day One. Meet his or her expectations and you'll prove your value and worth early. Your boss will feel comfortable about making the right decision in hiring you.

**Pitfall No. 2:** You haven't identified your boss's most important priorities.

**How to avoid it:** This is where you should get clear on the big picture. Where is the company headed this year, or five years from now? How does your department fit into that picture? Where does your boss see him or herself? How can you support that vision? By understanding what's important to your boss, you can prioritize your work to accomplish those things first. Your boss will gain immediate confidence in your work and be excited about the future possibilities that working with you offers. And while your boss may not verbalize the fact, you can bet that one key priority is looking good to his or her boss and the company's C-level managers. You can help make that happen.

**Pitfall No. 3:** Not seeing yourself as a leader.

**How to avoid it:** You are no longer in the trenches. Your focus is no longer on your tasks, it's on your team. Bosses are not individual contributors — they are team players and team leaders. Sometimes that's a difficult shift to make, because you may now be leading people who were your former peers. Think back to pitfall No. 2 and find ways to share the vision you've learned with your team. Relate your team's objectives directly back to the company's vision. Stop worrying about your own performance and focus instead on the **key strategies to building a stronger team**. Your job now is to provide leadership, resources and support.

**Pitfall No. 4:** Playing like the Lone Ranger.

**How to avoid it:** You can't do it all by yourself. And if you try, you may fail spectacularly as a boss. Instead, find mentors and advocates, both inside and outside the company. Look for people who have been where you are and been successful. Ask them for support, feedback and guidance on a regular basis. Look for advocates who will speak up for you when you make an important contribution. Seek out resources — books, articles, seminars,

coaches — that will provide insights that help you do your job better today as you grow steadily toward the next one.

Make sure you have regularly scheduled weekly one-on-ones with your boss. Have an agenda that includes ways he or she can support you in meeting the challenges of your new role. Don't be afraid to ask, "How am I doing?" and make midcourse corrections quickly if you need to.

Going from employee to boss is a challenging transition. You will make mistakes, which will be valuable only if you learn from them. When you realize that, according to current statistics, 40% of newly promoted employees fail in the first 18 months, you recognize how important it is to invest some time and energy in yourself and provide yourself with **coaching to the new leadership** to ensure your immediate and ongoing success.

*Joel Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 leadership coaches in the U.S. As an **executive coach**, he has worked with many of the world's leading companies, including Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Deloitte, Cisco Systems, and The Ritz-Carlton. He is the author of seven books, including **"Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level."** More than 10,000 people subscribe to his Fulfillment@Work newsletter. **If you sign up**, you'll receive the free e-book "41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!"*